X-Ray Vision: Creating an Inspiring Workplace for Library Staff with Hidden Disabilities

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Objectives

1. Define what hidden disabilities are

2. Explore myths surrounding issues of hidden disabilities

3. Share research completed on hidden disabilities in academic research libraries

4. Recommend/Discuss best practices for creating a disability friendly organizational culture and climate

Questions to be answered

- What challenges library employees with hidden disabilities are facing daily in the work place?

- How can we create an inviting place to work for people with hidden disabilities?

- What policies, procedures and resources are available in our selected institutional members of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and National Library of Medicine (NIH)?
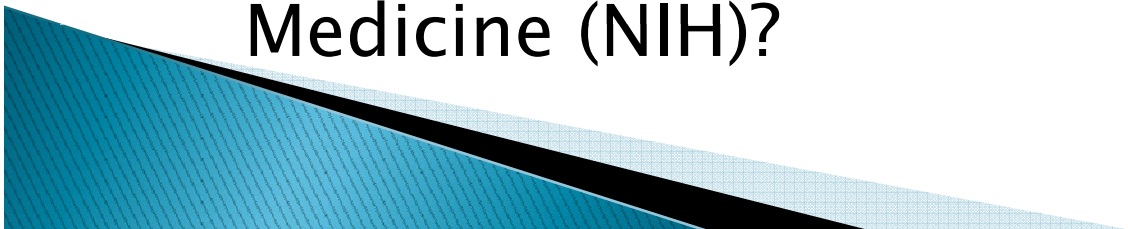
What is a Disability?

"Disability is a limitation in performing socially defined roles and tasks expected of an individual within a sociocultural and physical environment."

Nagi, S. 1965. Some conceptual Issues in disability and rehabilitation. In: Sussman MD, ed. *Sociology and Rehabilitation*. Washington, DC: American Sociological Association
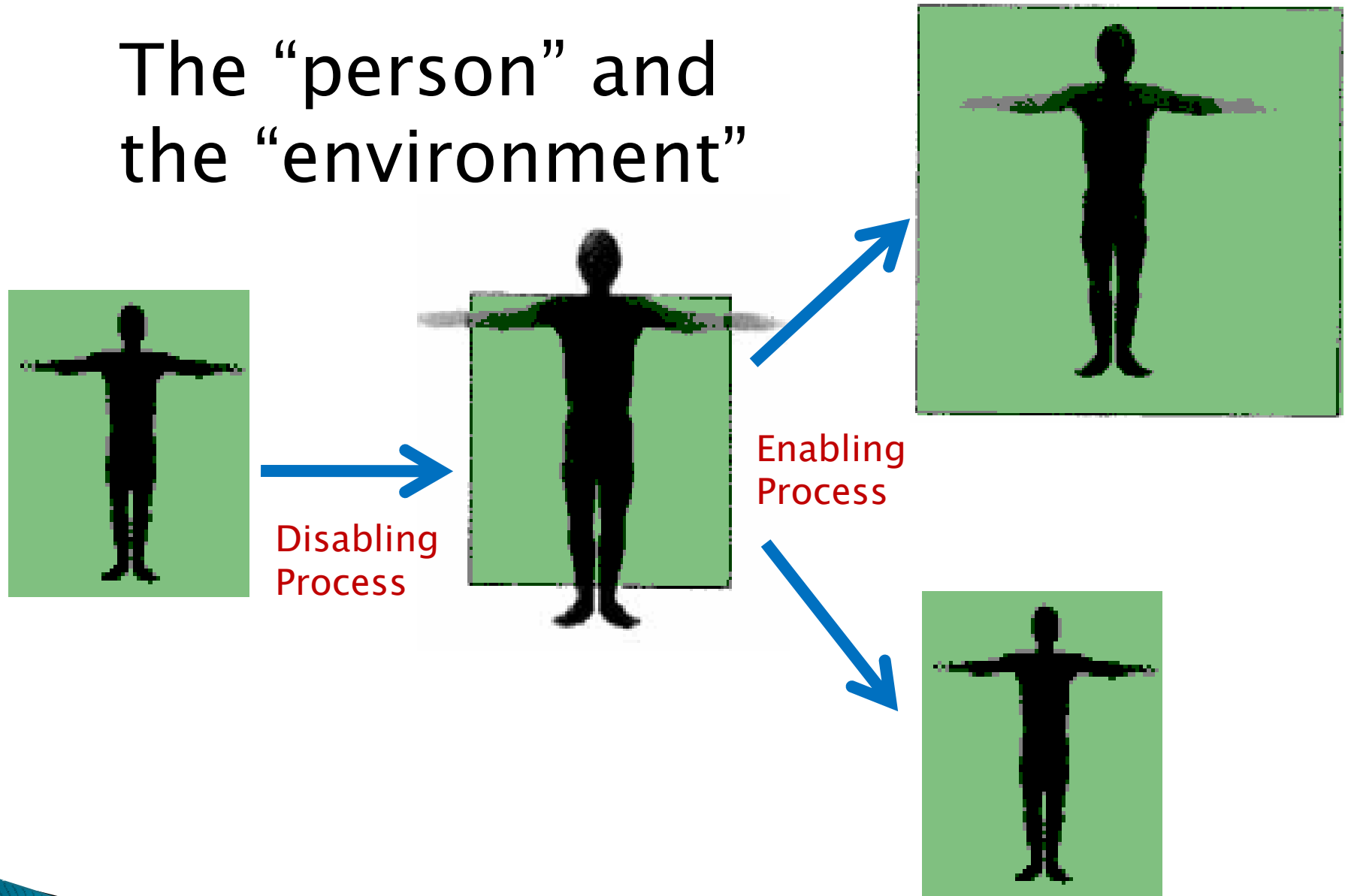
Family, interpersonal relations

Education

Work, employment

Recreation

5

The "person" and the "environment"

Disabling Process

Enabling Process

Brandt E, Pope A, EDS. 1997. *Enabling America: Accessing the Role of Rehabilitation Science and Engineering.* Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

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What is a Hidden Disability?

1. Impairment in functioning
2. Decrease in quality of life
3. Restricted lifestyle
4. Focus on pain
5. Feeling defensive
6. Stigma
7. Chronicity
8. Feeling misunderstood

Taylor, S. "Living well with a hidden disability",
Oakland, Calif. : New Harbinger , 1999
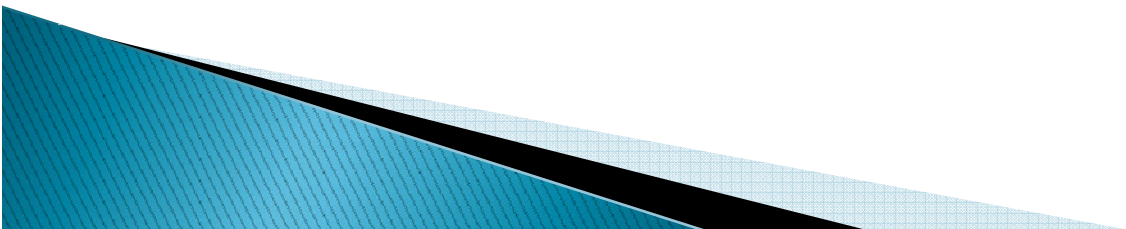
Examples

Chemical sensitivity • Arthritis •
Migraines • Colitis • Asthma • Lupus •
Chronic fatigue syndrome • Chronic pain • Diabetes •
Multiple sclerosis • Cancer • Repetitive
stress injuries • ADD/ADHD • Depression •
Fibromyalgia • Epilepsy •
Hypertension • Emotional disabilities •
HIV/AIDS • Brain injury • Learning disability
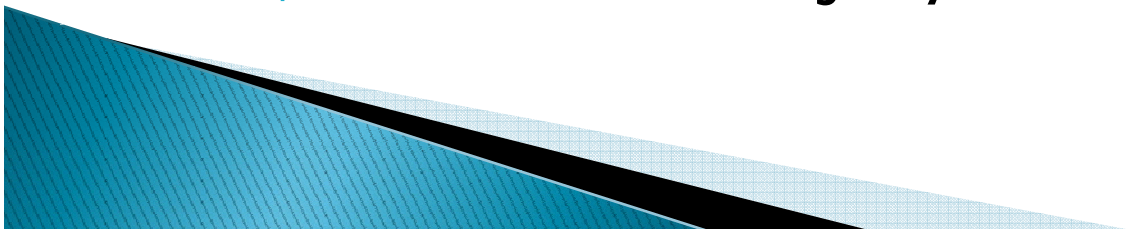
What Libraries have done?

- Improved physical facilities

- Policies for serving patrons with visible disabilities
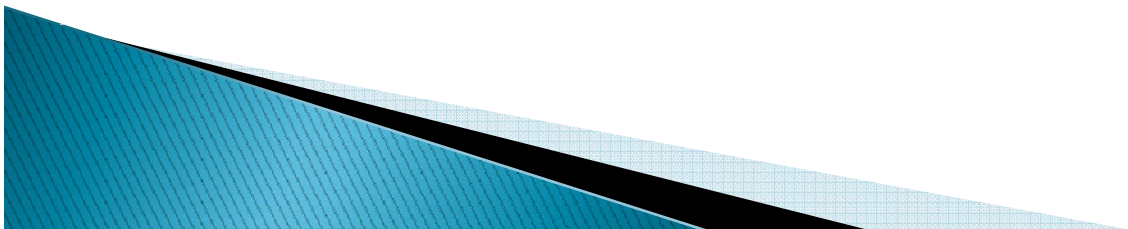
Demographics

National level

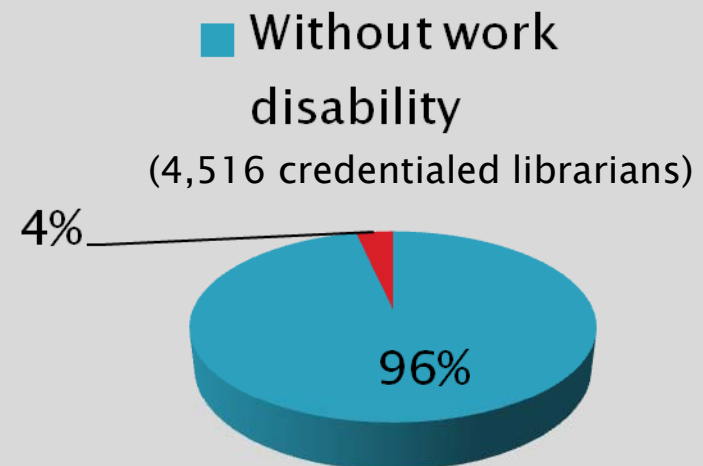**U.S. Census 2002**

- ■ Without disability
- ■ With disabilities
  (51.2 million people)

18% — 82%
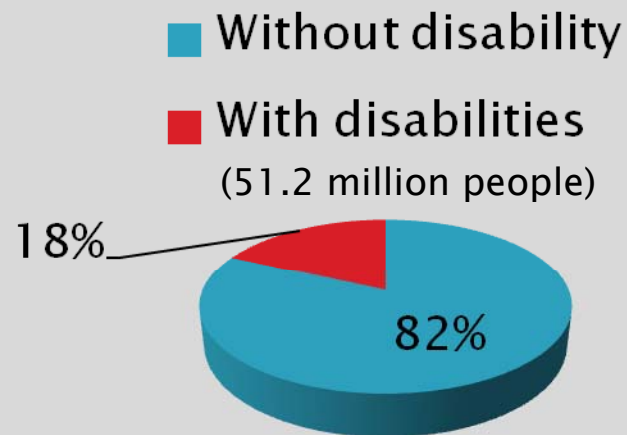
Library professional level

ALA Office for Research and Statistics 2006

- ■ Without work disability
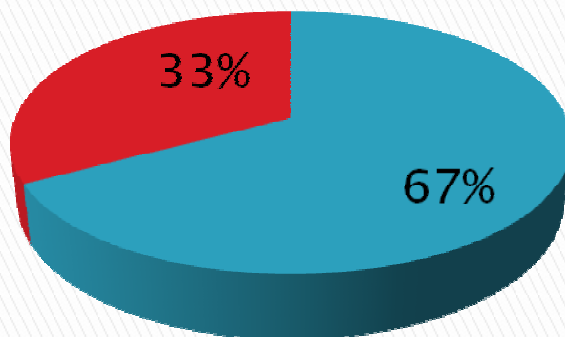 (4,516 credentialed librarians)

4% — 96%

Demographics cont.

Local level, Washington DC area (three institutions)

ARL institutions

- ■ Without disabilities
- ■ With disabilities

33%

67%

Age distribution of 117 respondents

% respondents

40
30
20
10
0

20–30   31–40   41–50   51–60   61+
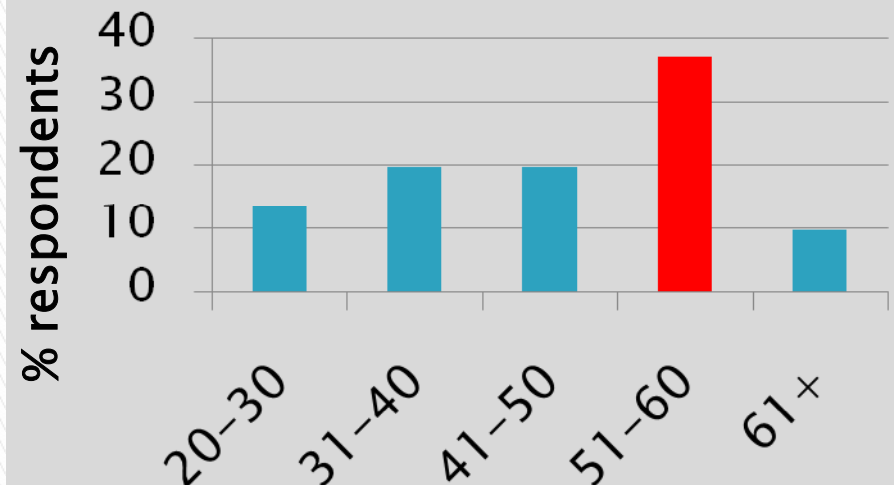
History of U.S. Legislation

- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Telecommunications Act
- Fair Housing Act
- Air Carrier Access Act
- Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act
- National Voter Registration Act
- Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- Rehabilitation Act
- Section 508
- Architectural Barriers Act

Attitudes

A hidden disability may not be considered by some to be a "true" disability.

"*Sometimes I wish I looked disabled. Then people could see how much I'm hurting inside.*"

Joan who has Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Myths and Realities

- **Myth 1**: The cost

- **Myth 2**: The wrong assumption

- **Myth 3**: The employee from the older workforce

- **Myth 4**: The stress

- **Myth 5**: The Depression

At the workplace	As a medical condition

Our Research

- Pilot our survey instrument to collect data on hidden disabilities.

- Our goal is to share the data so that others can develop strategies that will support library staff with hidden disabilities.

- Understand the difficult issue of self-disclosure.

- Understand interaction of co-workers and customers.

- Identify supporting policies, procedures and resources.

Our Research: Data

Questions	%
With disabilities	32.8 %
With hidden disabilities compared to physical (8.3 %) and both (45.8%)	45.8 %
Disclosed their disabilities	59.1%
Asked for reasonable accommodations	22.7%
Had extended absences due to disability	31.8%
Have received supervisor's understanding and support	50.0%
Experienced discrimination/alienation from co-workers compared to supervisors (18.2%) and library users (9.5%)	31.8%
Had excellent work relationships with supervisors compared to co-workers (27.3%) and library users (35.0%)	36.4%
Did not know which office provided disability accommodations	57.5%
Were not aware of library policy statement on disabilities compared to those who were aware (12.2%) and those who had some degree of knowledge (39.0%)	48.8%
Did not know if job descriptions were inclusive to persons with disabilities	54.3%

Our Research: Findings

1. Supervisors don't know policies and procedures
2. Staff don't know if Libraries have a policy
3. Relationship of supervisor and staff determine disclosure
4. Environment not welcoming
5. Personal beliefs about one's disability
6. Concern about accommodations
7. Lack of education on hidden disabilities
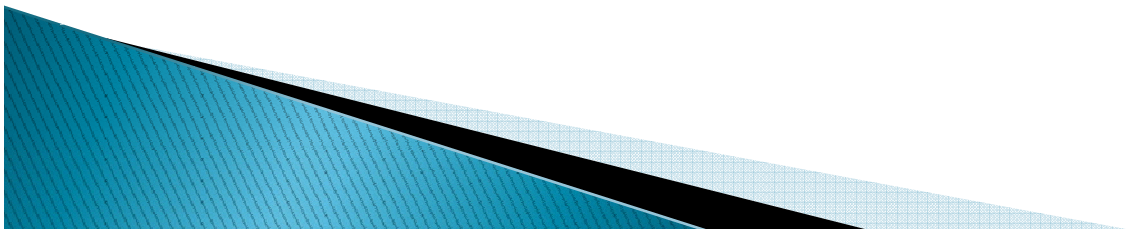
Self-disclosure:
What determines it???

Myth of the body perfection

▸ Fears of staff/co-workers and their attitudes

▸ Relationship of worker and supervisor

▸ Relationship of staff with co-workers

Policies and Procedures

- ADA prohibits discrimination in all employment practices.
- Employment discrimination is prohibited against qualified individuals with disabilities.
- Protects individuals with a record of disability.
- Protects individuals with a substantially limiting impairment.

- Modifying work environment to enable a qualified employee with a "known" disability to perform essential job functions is "reasonable accommodation."

Best Practices

- **University of California**
  - Davis, Division of Human Resources http://www.hr.ucdavis.edu/Health_Services/Disability_Management/Disabiltiy%20Forms
  - Office of the President http://www.ucop.edu/ucophome/coordrev/ucpolicies/aos/toc140.html

- **Sothern University of Connecticut,** Office of Diversity and Equity Programs, Policy statement http://www.southernct.edu/diversityequity/policyregardingpersonswithdisabilities/

- **University of Connecticut,** Office of Diversity and Equity, Policy statement http://web.uconn.edu/wwwode/POLICYST.html

- **Cornell University**
  - Policy statement www.policy.cornell.edu/PDF_613_Disability_Accommodation.cfm
  - Disability accommodation process http://www.policy.cornell.edu/vol6_13.cfm

Examples of Reasonable Accommodations

- Alerting device
  - Flashing fire alarm
  - Vibrating device
- Qualified interpreters and note takers
- Assistive listening devices
  - Hearing aid-compatible digital wireless phones

- Closed captioning
- Low Vision Aids
  - Hand held magnifiers
  - Video Magnifiers
  - Reading machines with voice output
- Ergonomic furniture and devices
- Alternative work schedules

Ergonomic two handed keyboard

Ergonomic chair

Portable Closed Circuit TV

Alternative Pointing Devices and Switches

Creating a Disability Friendly Organizational Culture

Six Essential Elements

1. Develop a philosophy of disability

> *"The Center on Disabilities is an integral part of the university mission of teaching, scholarship and active learning, furthering the vision of an inclusive society which supports the attainment of academic, professional and personal goals* for **persons of all abilities**. *The Center fulfills this mission through programs of student service, education, and research."*

California State University at Northridge
http://www.csun.edu/cod/aboutus.htm

Creating a Disability Friendly Organizational Culture (cont.)

1. Develop a philosophy of disability
2. Ensure strong top management support
3. Write job descriptions that are disability friendly
4. Recruit and hire persons with disabilities
5. Educate staff to the issues of disabilities
6. Use top-down and bottom-up change initiatives. Be open to advocacy
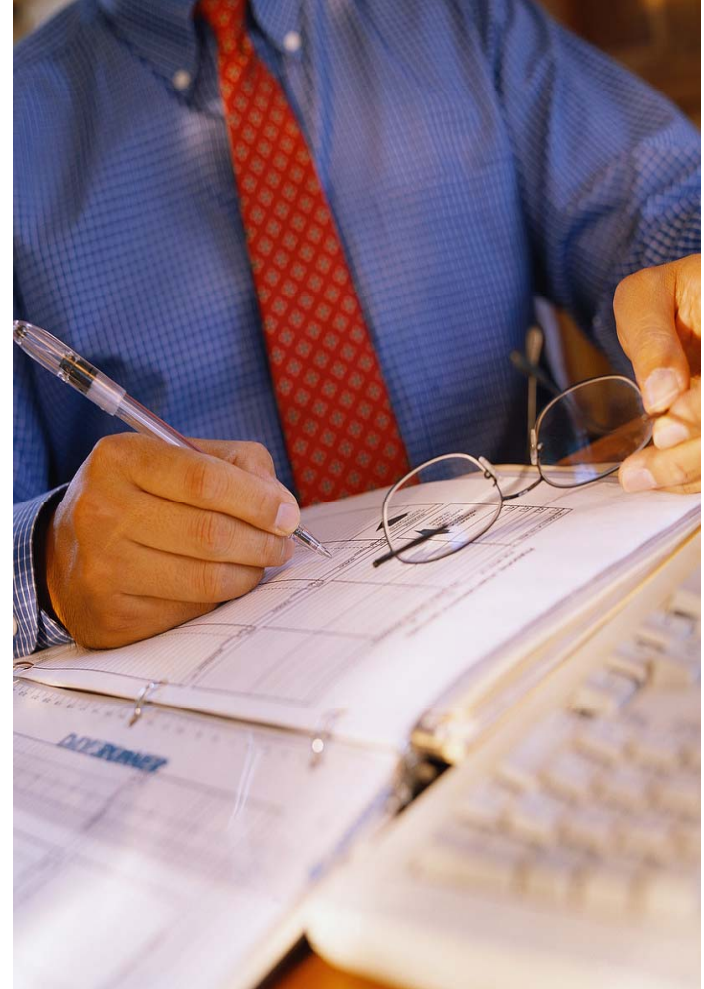
Resources

Resources

- National Library of Medicine, NIH
  http://www.nlm.nih.gov

- Medline Plus
  http://medlineplus.gov/

- National Center of Physical Activity and Disability
  http://www.ncpad.org/

- U.S. Department of Labor
  http://www.dol.gov/odep

- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services
  http://www.cms.hhs.gov/TWWIIA

- U.S. Department of Justice, A Guide to Disability Rights Laws
  http://www.ada.gov/cguide.htm

- Social Security Online
  http://www.ssa.gov/disability/

- National Women's Health Information Center
  http://womenshealth.gov/wwwd/

- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
  http://www.hud.gov/groups/disabilities.cfm

- Internal Revenue Service
  http://www.irs.gov

- Transportation Security Administration
  http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/specialneeds/editorial_1374.shtm

Need for Strategic Planning

Strategic Planning

- Include retention and recruitment into organizational strategic plan.
- Know the Law.
- Plan reasonable accommodations.
- Budget for reasonable accommodations.
- Include reasonable accommodations in disaster preparedness plan.
- Provide staff training.

United States
National Library of Medicine
National Institutes of Health

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Charting a Course for the 21st Century – NLM's Long Range Plan 2006-2016

| Title Page | Foreword | Preface | Executive Summary | Strategic Vision | 1986-2006: Two Decades of Progress |
| Plan for 2006-2016 | Closing | Appendices | Footnotes | Index |

- **Goal 4.** A Strong and Diverse Workforce for Biomedical Informatics, Research, Systems Development and Innovative Service Delivery

- **Recommendation 4.1.** Develop an expanded and diverse workforce through enhanced visibility of biomedical informatics and library science for K–12 and college students.

- 2007 – 2008 Associate Fellows

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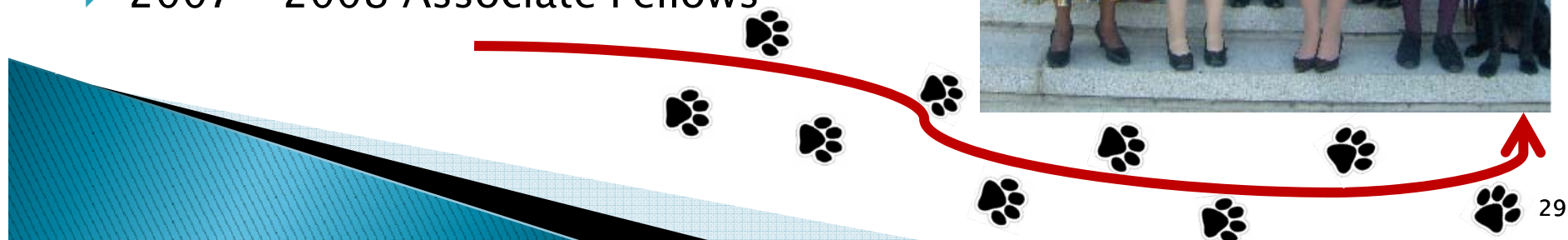
Policies

Procedures

Resources

Strategic Planning

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Create a Disability Friendly Workplace

Thank you

Time for Q & A.

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